

Redcliffs School Announcement

7 July 2016

Frequently Asked Questions

What has been announced?

On 25 November 2015, the Minister made an interim decision that Redcliffs School should close. This interim decision was made because the Minister was concerned about:

- The potential for future disruption if Redcliffs School was to return to the Main Road site, because there will be ongoing rockfall from the cliffs next to the school.
- The uncertainty of timing of a return to the Main Road site, as there was no timeframe set for the removal of houses from the cliff top behind the school.

On 7 July 2016, the Minister advised the Board that she is now satisfied that the Board's submission has adequately addressed these two concerns. Because of this, she has not confirmed her interim decision that the school should close, and the consultation process about the closure proposal has ended.

Before a decision is made about whether the school can return to its site, further consideration will be given to two other matters raised through the consultation process, which are the possibility of negative psychosocial effects for children of attending school on the Main Road site, and the possibility of relocation to an alternative site.

Why is the Minister not confirming her interim decision?

In response to the Minister's interim decision, the school's Board of Trustees put forward a new mitigation strategy, developed by engineering firm Eliot Sinclair, which has been designed to address the risk of disruption from rockfall and ensure the physical safety of the site. This new proposal recommends retreating the usable area of the school site even further away from the cliff, and building a bund (of a different design than originally proposed) along the new boundary. This would be a major work that would reduce the size of the school site by approximately 40%.

The Ministry commissioned an independent review of the new proposal by another engineering firm, and also sought advice on this from other technical advisers that have previously provided advice about the Main Road site. The technical advice received broadly supported the conclusions of the Eliot Sinclair report.

While there will continue to be rockfall from the cliff, the expert advice indicates that the specific concerns about the physical impact of the ongoing rockfalls that led to the interim decision for closure have been adequately addressed through the consultation process, and don't warrant closure of the school.

Why are psychosocial considerations being looked into?

The Board's submission raised concerns about possible negative psychosocial effects for the community if the school was closed. The Ministry engaged an independent specialist in the area of child, adolescent and family mental health to consider these potential effects. The specialist was also asked to consider the possibility of negative psychosocial effects for children attending school at the Main Road site where there will be ongoing rockfall from the cliff behind it, and major mitigation works on the school boundary.



The specialist considered that there could be a risk to the psychosocial wellbeing of children if they attend school on the Main Road site. This possibility is concerning and needs further investigation, to ensure that Redcliffs children are able to learn in an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe for them.

What are the next steps for the school?

The Ministry is going to undertake an in depth investigation into the question of whether there are psychosocial risks for children if the school returns to its original site. At the same time, it is going to explore another possibility raised by the Board, for the relocation of the school to an alternative site in the Redcliffs area.

If the school could be relocated, this could address both the Board's concerns about potential negative psychosocial effects that closure could have on the community, as well as the possible negative psychosocial effects for children if the school returns to the Main Road site. Relocation could also mean that the school wouldn't have to compromise the size of its site, and would mean that the school wouldn't have to deal with the ongoing management of the risk from the cliffs behind the site.

Where could the school be relocated to?

Previous investigations have suggested that Barnett Park is likely to be the only viable option for relocating the school, however the Ministry will also look again to see whether there are any other options in the Redcliffs area that warrant exploration.

The Christchurch City Council has a strong interest in Barnett Park and they would therefore be involved in the process to relocate a school on part of the Park should that be progressed. Accordingly the Ministry will also be working with the Council in the next two months as it explores the feasibility of the relocation option.

I thought relocation had been ruled out previously. Why is it being considered again?

The Ministry and the school's Board have previously investigated the possibility of an alternative site for the school, and only Barnett Park was identified as a viable option. Previous proposals for other types developments for the Barnett Park site have been opposed by the Redcliffs community.

However, given the very high level of community support that has been demonstrated for retaining a school in Redcliffs, including the support that the Mayor and Council have shown for this, the Ministry considers that the possibility of part of Barnett Park being used for relocation of the school should be further investigated.

What is the process for these investigations, and who will be involved?

This next stage is not a formal consultation process, it is about gathering information. To progress this work the Ministry will engage with the school's Board of Trustees, the Christchurch City Council, and people who can provide psychosocial expertise.

The Ministry would also like to hear from the school community and the wider Redcliffs community.

When will we know what's happening next for the school?

Following these investigations, the Ministry will report back to the Minister by the end of September 2016.

At that point, further decisions will need to be made about whether the school can return to its site, or whether relocation is going to be feasible. Those decisions will be made by mid October 2016.



Where will Redcliffs School children attend school in 2017?

While the further investigations are occurring, the Ministry will work with Redcliffs School and Van Asch Deaf Education Centre to ensure that site sharing can continue on the Van Asch site during 2017. The Ministry will continue to provide transport funding for buses during this time. The Ministry recognises that site sharing has put pressure on both of these schools.

What about other schools that are affected by the decision for Redcliffs School?

The Ministry has been working with Mt Pleasant and Sumner Schools to plan for the property redevelopment that is needed at these schools. This process will continue, and now that the master planning stage is complete, the next step is the procurement of a design team.

The Ministry will set a roll number for the builds that allows for reasonable future growth and will build non-teaching spaces (such as the hall, administration and library) to meet space requirements for these roll numbers. Teaching spaces will be built in stages to meet short-term growth, and additional stages will be planned and implemented when or if required.

Further information available
on the *Shaping Education* website
www.shapingeducation.govt.nz

